

# The National Civil Rights Committee Annual Report FY-2004

<u>Introduction</u>	<u>FY-04 Activities</u>
<p><b>Mission:</b> The Bylaws of the NRCS National Civil Rights Committee (NCRC) state that the committee shall serve as an advisor to the Chief, NRCS. As such, the committee serves four functions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Advises the Chief to promote and assist in meaningful and effective affirmative action consistent with the goals and objectives set forth by management.</li><li>2. Provides feedback on the agency performance in EEO &amp; CR compliance, identifying areas of weakness and making recommendations for improvement.</li><li>3. Identifies emerging areas needing special attention of the Chief and top management.</li><li>4. Makes recommendations to the Chief on policy, practices and procedures as they affect EO/CR agency wide.</li></ol> <p>The Committee is an impartial advisory body to the Chief made up of employees from throughout the agency and is diverse in grade level, job series, racial/ethnic background, and geographic region. The chair of the committee is appointed by the Chief and report directly to the Chief. The Civil Rights division Director and the Human Resources division Director serve the committee in an advisory capacity.</p>	<p><b>NCRC Membership:</b></p> <p><b>Chair:</b> Rosendo Trevino III, STC, Albuquerque, NM</p> <p><b>Assistant to the Chair:</b> Rita Yarborough, NM</p> <p><b>Members:</b> Leander Brown, Soil Scientist, Laurel, ML Ronald Reckner, Resource Soil Scientist, Pinedale, WY Cliff Sanchez, Area Conservationist, Socorro, NM George Heffner, District Conservationist, Portage, MI Marilyn Jacobsen Riddle, Area IT Specialist, Vernal, UT Susan Riedel, Physical Science Technician, Lincoln, NE Noller Herbert, Resource Conservation for Rural Lands, Washington, D.C. Faye Williams, Secretary, Christiansted, VI Oliver Miranda, District Conservationist, Upper Hadley, MD Thedis Crowe, Resource Conservationist, Bozeman, MT Sharyn Alvarez, Federal Women's Program Manager, Beltsville, MD Barbara Aflague, Public Affairs Specialist, Mongmong, Guam</p> <p><b>Advisors:</b> Andrew Johnson, Director of Civil Rights Staff Karen Karlinchak, Director Human Resources Division Larry Holmes, Director, Outreach Division Dan Lawson, Director, Strategic &amp; Performance Planning Division</p>

<u>FY-04 Activities</u>	<u>Issues/Accomplishments</u>
<p><b>Meetings:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. October 27-31, 2003 Lexington, KY</li><li>2. March 23-24, 2004 Nebraska City, NE</li><li>3. July 12-16, 2004 Verona, NY</li></ol> <p><b>Focus:</b> The NCRC continued its focus on accountability in FY04. The Committee has identified trends in issues which are brought before the Committee by the field for action. The NCRC worked diligently in following up on recommendations it has made to NRCS Division and Staff Directors to ensure action is taken. The significant concerns raised included the continuing concern with inaccurate PRMS RSNO/Parity data, concerns of discrimination against specific ethnic groups and ensuring accessibility for employees and customers with disabilities. The NCRC met with the Kentucky State Civil Rights Committee, the Lincoln Soils Lab Civil Rights Committee and Nebraska State Civil Rights members. The NCRC held the summer meeting in conjunction with the American Indian/Alaska Native Employees Association (AIANEA) and participated at the conference. The committee spent a great deal of time addressing the roles of the NCRC and evaluating whether or not the Committee is serving the agency's needs as well as the needs of the Chief.</p>	<p><b>Awards:</b> The following award recommendations were approved by the Chief:</p> <p><b>NCRC Individual Award:</b></p> <p><u>Sandra Penn, Michigan</u></p> <p><b>NCRC Team Award:</b></p> <p><u>Imperial Clascasieu RC&amp;D Council, Louisiana</u></p> <p><b>Chief's Workforce Diversity Non-Manager Award:</b></p> <p><u>Leslie Hainey, Michigan</u></p> <p><b>Chief's Workforce Diversity Manager Award:</b></p> <p><u>Frank Clearfield, Washington, DC</u></p> <p><b>Issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 14 Issues were reviewed by the Committee</li><li>• 1 Issue was forwarded to the Chief</li><li>• 3 Issues were forwarded to Advisors</li><li>• 10 Issues were resolved by the Committee</li></ul>

Significant challenges exist in the collection and reporting of race, gender, ethnicity, and disability customer information, relative to customer service, program participation, and board membership. Central to these challenges are accurate and complete 1) SCIMS data, 2) current U.S. Census of Agriculture, 2000 Census of Agriculture, agricultural produce information, and 3) performance and progress reporting through Integrated Accountability System (AIS).

Specifically of concern is the difficulty in identifying the racial and ethnic backgrounds of our customers, the inaccurate reporting of female customers because of the joint husband/wife ownership, and the lack of accountability of time spent specifically performing civil rights activities.

In FY 2004, NRCS took a number of actions that budget the Agency closer to more accurate customer service information. With the migration to a Service Center based common customer database (SCIMS), strides were made in greater efficiency of customer information among NRCS, FSA, and RD. There are significant data, particularly in customer ethnicity; FSA administers the SCIMS application, but NRCS has an agency contact who is working closely with FSA to make all necessary system adjustments. In PRS, adjustments were made in the RSNOD categories to coincide with changes in National Agricultural Census 2000 categories.

**Advisors**  
The NCRC continues to keep abreast of existing programs, activities and upcoming trends and receives reports at each meeting from the Director of Civil Rights, Director or Human Resources and the Director of the Outreach Division.

**Fact Sheets**  
The committee recommended and received approval to send out two *Fact Sheets 32+ Ways to improve in EO and CR* and *Civil Rights Program Responsibilities for District/Designated Conservationists*.

**Positive Steps for Overcoming Specific Barriers and Increasing Conservation Program Participation by Target Groups**  
The 2002 Farm Bill identifies four specific groups (Limited Resources Farmers and Ranchers; American Indian and Alaska Native Farmers and Ranchers; Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers; and Beginning Farmers and Ranchers), recognizing the assistance they need to practice conservation on lands they own or manage. The intent of this document is to assist in identifying barriers to program participation by individuals within these groups and provide ideas to overcome these barriers. The State and field staffs should identify additional barriers for their particular area and develop specific methods and techniques to overcome these barriers. The NCRC revisited an analysis to continue overcoming specific barriers and increase conservation program participation by target groups to try to assess progress being made to overcome these BARRIERS. This information was shared with NHQ to assist in these efforts.